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Margaret M. Condon and Evan T. Jones (eds.), ‘Bristol 1465: Particulars of Account of Thomas Gibbes and John Senecle, customers, 29 September to 28 November 1465: introduction’ (University of Bristol, PURE, 2016)¹

Text and Comment

The customers’ ledger for Michaelmas to November 1465 is typical of the 1460s, both for its short period of account, and for the patterns of trade it reveals.² The largest and most valuable body of trade, in both English and foreign bottoms, was with Portugal. There is one ‘out’ voyage to Bordeaux; and the usual trade with Ireland, in which ships returned with fish and other agricultural produce. Certain commodities, such as salt and alum, were valued at double the rate of imports when sent to Ireland, and are so entered without comment by the clerks.

One of the distinctive features of the account is the sailings of several very large ships, each entered as a ‘navis’ by the clerks of the customs house. This description seems to have been applied by Bristol’s officers to vessels of c.150 tons burden and above.³ Noteworthy sailings include two voyages by what were probably noble-owned ships and a voyage in and out by the *Kateryn* of Lisbon, mastered by Bartholomew Dies/Deux. While it might be tempting to associate him with the famous Portuguese explorer of the same name, they are unlikely to be the same. The surname ‘Dies’ was not uncommon and recurs periodically in the Bristol accounts. Given the date of the account, it seems improbable that the master of the *Kateryn* of Lisbon (25 October 1465) was the same man who rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1485, in the service of the Portuguese Crown.

The ‘navis’ described as the *Mary Herbert* probably belonged to Sir William Herbert, who was by this time Wales’ leading magnate and a valued supporter of Edward IV. While he had yet to be made earl of Pembroke (1468), Herbert had held the lordship of Newport, just across the Severn from Bristol, since 1461.⁴ He is known to have possessed at least two ships which, like his ally (and future mortal enemy) the earl of Warwick, he used for both trade and military purposes. One of Herbert’s ships was a ‘navis’ called *Mary*, which was employed in the Bristol Channel in December 1463.⁵ It seems highly likely that the *Mary Herbert* that left Bristol for Lisbon on 2 October 1465, was the same vessel.⁶

¹ The National Archives: Public Record Office, UK [TNA:PRO], E122/19/3. This transcription is an output of the ‘Cabot Project’ (University of Bristol, 2009-2016), funded by Gretchen Bauta, a private Canadian benefactor. We are indebted to Professor Wendy Childs for assistance with Iberian names. This transcription was originally completed in 2014.

² Trade and shipping as detailed in this account is analysed in Evan T. Jones, ‘The shipping industry of the Severn Sea’ and Richard Stone, ‘Bristol’s overseas trade in the later fifteenth century: the evidence of the ‘particular’ customs accounts’ in Evan T. Jones and Richard Stone (eds.), *The World of the Newport Ship* (University of Wales Press, forthcoming).

³ Jones, ‘The shipping industry’.

⁴ Ralph A. Griffiths, ‘Herbert, William, first earl of Pembroke (c.1423–1469)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵ Ralph A. Griffiths, ‘Sailing the Severn Sea in the mid-fifteenth century’, in Jones and Stone, *World of the Newport Ship* (forthcoming).

⁶ An alternative owner for the ship might be Thomas Herbert, Sir William Herbert’s brother. Thomas is known to have had some involvement in the wine trade in 1463 while serving as one of Edward IV’s ambassadors in Spain. He had also, with his brother, been employed in 1462 to acquire ships from Bristol for naval service: D. H. Thomas, *The Herberts of Raglan and the Battle of Edgecote, 1469* (Enfield, 1994), pp. 87-91. Given Thomas’ association with Bristol, Gloucestershire and shipping, it seems probable he was also the Thomas Herbert appointed as customer of Bristol in May 1466. Unlike his brother, however, no evidence has been found to suggest that Thomas was either a ship-owner or that he had a significant engagement in overseas trade. A third potential owner for the *Mary Herbert* might be the Bristol merchant ‘William Herbert’, who is mentioned in a licence of 1471, two years after Sir William Herbert’s death: E. W. W. Veale, *The Great Red Book of Bristol II* (Bristol

The *Mary Redcliffe*, exiting to Bordeaux 30 October, was owned by the great Bristol merchant William Canynges; in company with the *George of Warwick* she returned from Bordeaux with a cargo of wine, woad, rosin, honey and iron on 17 February 1466.⁷ The *George* ‘of Warwick’ seems likely to have been a ship belonging to Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, rather than to the Midlands city of the same name.⁸ Warwick, ‘the Kingmaker’, as he later became known, possessed a fleet he used for trade as well as for war. In 1469 a ship of his was laid up in Newport for repair, with the involvement of at least two Bristol merchants.⁹ Warwick’s *George* was said to be around 140 tons burden, a figure not reflected in the account of 1466. On the other hand, if she brought back wine for consumption in the households of the earl or the king this would not be customable. Moreover, it would be possible to evade English customs duties if she had broken bulk in one of the ports of Wales, where Warwick, as lord of Glamorgan, held significant estates, with the port town of Cardiff as its administrative centre.¹⁰

Editorial Practice

The transcription into Microsoft Excel follows the pattern set by Evan Jones for his ESRC-funded project on Ireland-Bristol trade in the sixteenth century.¹¹ These conventions are summarised in the introduction to the account for 1461. In particular, surnames and ships’ names follow the manuscript; quantities of any particular commodity have, as far as practicable, been standardised to a single unit, calculated if necessary to two decimal places. Wine and cloth of assize have been notionally valued at £4 and £2 respectively, unless specifically valued in the manuscript. All entries in italics, including extensions of abbreviations, have been supplied by the editors.

The presence of editorial comments is marked by a red triangle in the upper corner of any cell, and appears on mouse hover. Comments on discrepancies in value/quantity have been attached to the ‘commodity’ where they are more clearly visible.

Record Society 1938), pp. 136-9. He appears, however, to have been a minor merchant, who is not otherwise found trading through Bristol. Since it was unusual for any but the richest of Bristol’s merchants to own great ships, it seems an unlikely owner of the *Mary Herbert*.

⁷ TNA: PRO, E122/19/4, fo. 10v; for Canynges fleet of ships, E. M. Carus-Wilson, *The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Later Middle Ages* (Bristol Record Society, vii (1937), p. 140.

⁸ The city of Warwick lies about ninety miles upriver from Newnham, which was about the furthest point to which ships could navigate on the River Severn. Although the Severn itself was navigable by barge as far as Welshpool, its tributary, the Warwickshire Avon, does not seem to have been navigable by any but the smallest river vessels beyond Evesham, thirty miles downriver from Warwick: Evan T. Jones, ‘River navigation in medieval England’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26 (2000), pp. 68-9.

⁹ Cora Scofield, *The Reign of Edward IV* (2 vols, London, 1923), ii, p. 417; Michael Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 250-1. See also the chapters in Jones and Stone, *World of the Newport Ship* (forthcoming).

¹⁰ For Warwick as lord of Glamorgan: Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, pp. 59-61, 81-5, 123, 169.

¹¹ Databases at <http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Ireland/datasets.htm> (accessed 29 January 2014); these were reformatted and published with indexes and abbreviated glossaries as Susan Flavin and Evan Jones, *Bristol’s Trade with Ireland and the Continent 1503-1601* (Bristol Record Society, vol. 61, 2009). Editorial conventions are repeated at pp. xxii-xxv.